

**NAVY-MARINE CORPS RESERVE CENTER
LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
OFFICIAL NOTICE OF INTEREST**

June 11, 2008

The Reading School District submits the following Notice of Interest for public conveyance of the Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Center for use as an educational facility to operate an early childhood center and alternative education program to serve children in Reading, Pennsylvania.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

- 1. Legal name of government entity or non-profit institution requesting the use of buildings or property at the Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Center, Reading, Pennsylvania.**

Reading School District

- 2. Address and telephone number of applicant**

Thomas R. Chapman, Jr., Superintendent
Reading School District
800 Washington Street
Reading, PA 19601
(610) 371-5611

- 3. Name and title of contact person.**

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- 4. Name and title of person(s) authorized to complete conveyance or purchase, and/or execute any lease or agreements. Attach a copy of the legal authority permitting these persons to complete such transactions.**

The Reading School District Board of Education will designate the authorized district representative. A copy of the authorizing resolution will be submitted at a later date.

- 5. Statement regarding whether applicant is state, political sub-division of state or private non-profit, tax exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the 1986 Internal Revenue Code. If applicant is a private not-for-profit entity, attach a copy of the IRS recognition of its Section 501(c)(3) exemption status.**

The applicant, Reading School District, is a local educational agency in Pennsylvania.

6. A copy of the document showing statutory or legal authority under which the applicant is authorized by law to acquire and hold title to property or to lease property.

Reading School District will hold title to the property as authorized by § 21.1 of the Pennsylvania School Code.

7. Requirements for applicants other than public agencies:

Not applicable.

8. A copy of current constitution/charter/by-laws or Articles of Incorporation as appropriate.

The authority of Reading School District as a local educational agency in Pennsylvania is contained in Article 2, Section 211 of the Pennsylvania Public School Code.

II. PROPOSED PROGRAM

1. A detailed narrative description of the proposed use of the property or building.

The Reading School District proposes using the Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Center property for an alternative education program. The district currently operates its primary alternative education program through contracting with an outside provider, Cornell Abraxus. To ensure greater control over quality of curriculum and services to students, the district will operate its own alternative education program beginning with the 2008-09 school year. Through a one-year lease, the alternative education program will operate at the former St. Cyril School site located on South Sixth Street. The district has been investigating future sites for the program and is proposing the Naval-Marine Corps Reserve Center as a viable site. In preparation for opening the district-operated program, planning meetings have been held throughout March, April and May 2008. Meetings have included community-based groups and service providers, as indicated in the chart below:

Alternative Education Planning Meetings

Date	Time	Topic	Location
3/26/2008	4-6 PM	Academics / Direct Instruction	Admin. Building
3/28/2008	9-11 AM	Academics / Technology	Admin. Building
4/1/2008	4-6 PM	Pupil Services / ISP (construction)	Admin. Building
4/2/2008	4-6 PM	Pupil Services / ISP (implementation)	Admin. Building
4/8/2008	9-11 AM	Community Integration (student services)	Admin. Building
4/9/2008	4-6 PM	Community Services (volunteer)	Admin. Building
4/15/2008	9-11 AM	Community Programming (Clubs, activities, ROTC)	Admin. Building
4/16/2008	4-6 PM	Community & Career Connections	Admin. Building

A Director for Alternative Education and a Principal have been hired. Currently, interviews are being held to hire teaching and support staff to fill the positions indicated on the following chart:

Alternative Education - Secondary Staffing - Salaries/Wages w/Benefits

POSITION	NUMBER	COST	DEPARTMENT/ SCHOOL	FUNDING SOURCE
Instructional Supervisor	1	83,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Teachers	12	600,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Teachers - SPED	8	400,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Counselor	1	50,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Teacher - ESL	1	50,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Educational Assistants- SPED	8	148,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Educational Assistants - ESL	2	37,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
On-site Translator	1	40,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Behavior Specialist	2	100,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Mental Health Worker	1	40,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Psychologist	1	75,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Social Worker-MSW	1	75,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Home and School Visitor	1	40,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Volunteer Coordinator	1	35,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Clerks	2	80,000	Level 4 & Level 2	General Fund
Security Guards	2	50,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Custodian	1	45,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
Cafeteria	2	30,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
School Nurse	1	50,000	Alternative Ed	General Fund
TOTALS	49	2,028,000		

Additionally, the Naval-Marine Corps Reserve Center site may be used to support additional pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten classes. Through creative use of existing school space, the Reading School District has been able to expand its full-day kindergarten program from just four classes in 2004-05 to 49 full-day classes in 2007-08. However, the district goal of providing full-day kindergarten for all children has yet to be realized due to lack of classroom space. Currently four of the 14 elementary schools still offer half-day sessions for some children. Additionally, due to expansion of full-day kindergarten, the number of pre-kindergarten sessions across the district was slightly reduced in the past two years. Currently, the district offers 25 half-day pre-kindergarten sessions.

2. A detailed assessment of the need for the proposed programs.

Alternative Education Program:

Alternative education programs serve students who are at-risk for failure within the traditional educational system. Students are placed in alternative education programs based upon at-risk characteristics including: suspensions for disregard for school rules, disruptive behavior, and habitual truancy. The goal of alternative education is to remove the student from the traditional school setting to provide a setting more conducive to meeting the needs of the student. The Reading School District alternative education program will offer students extra support and counseling, smaller class size, more personal environments, and positive relationships with

adults. Students will receive educational programs that focus on academic skills, social services and/or community work-based learning with specific educational and transition goals. The short-term goal for the alternative education program is to modify the disruptive behavior for repatriation of the students back into the regular school setting, while still meeting students' educational needs so they do not fall further behind academically. Upon re-entry back to home school, students will continue to receive resource services to ensure successful reintegration into the regular education program.

Research indicates that when students exhibit behaviors that put them at risk for academic failure, such as truancy, they are most likely to drop out of school. Providing alternative educational programs to keep students in school is preferable to having communities deal with the ramifications of young adult dropouts who are ill equipped to enter the work force and become contributing citizens.

The new alternative education program for the Reading School District will incorporate the following components and strategies proven to be effective in alternative education:

- Lower student-to-staff ratio.
- District and community support
- Strong leadership
- Highly trained and carefully selected staff
- Shared vision and clear focus for program
- Intensive behavior therapy and counseling
- Emphasis on real-life learning.
- Community programming with linkages between school and workplaces
- Working relationships with collaborating community agencies

Early Childhood Education Program:

Providing full-day kindergarten and pre-kindergarten experiences is crucial in "leveling the playing field" for low-income children in Reading. Research shows that full-day kindergarten experiences positively impact student learning. The Pennsylvania Department of Education strongly supports implementation of full-day kindergarten, particularly in districts serving large numbers of students at risk for academic failure based upon low-income levels and Limited English Proficiency.

While full-day kindergarten positively affects student learning, research shows that reaching children at an earlier age has even greater impact. In a 1995 study *Meaningful Differences* conducted by Drs. Hart and Risley at the University of Kansas, it was determined that children of poverty could conceivably hear 32 million fewer words upon arrival at kindergarten versus the children of professional parents. The Hart and Risley study showed that by age 3, the spoken vocabularies recorded for children from professional families were actually larger than the vocabularies recorded for the parents in the welfare families. The study underscored the need to provide children with early opportunities to engage in positive language interactions with knowledgeable adults. Given the district's large low-income population (87% of families eligible for free or reduced lunch program) and its large second language population (76% Latino families), an early opportunity to support language development in young children is

critical. The district currently operates 25 half-day pre-kindergarten classes for four-year-olds. Although state grant funding is available to hire teachers to expand district pre-kindergarten programs, lack of space limits expansion. Therefore, for 2007-08, the district was unable to apply for Pre-K counts state funding to increase its pre-kindergarten program.

3. Provide the following:

A. The need to expand existing facilities.

As part of its *Smaller, Safer, Smarter Schools* plan, the district is currently in the midst of a \$55 million comprehensive plan to repair and renovate its schools to ensure student and staff safety. Over the past five year's the district's student enrollment has increased over 1,000 students to a current enrollment of 17,425. In the past, the district had 32 schools but currently has only 21. Increased student enrollment and fewer facilities have resulted in overcrowding in most of the district's schools.

The district is currently alleviating the overcrowding at Reading High School by constructing the Citadel to serve students in grades 9 and 10 at the former St. Joseph Hospital site. To alleviate the overcrowding in middle schools, the district has adopted the concept of the grade 6 gateway schools. Two sixth grade gateway schools opened in 2006-07. The third gateway school will open for 2008-09 in the re-built Millmont School which is currently under construction to house two separate schools, one for grades Pre-K-5 and one for the Gateway School for Agriculture, Science and Ecology. The district has been aggressively seeking additional sites within the City of Reading to build seven additional small elementary schools to reduce overcrowding and expand its early childhood programs. The district is also seeking sites for the ROCK (Reading Opportunity Center for Kids), which will be a central site for new student registration and for information and orientation for both students and parents. It will provide testing and other transition services for children and families as they enter the Reading School District. And, as outlined in this proposal, the district is seeking a site for its alternative education program

Although the district has been actively pursuing possible sites within the City of Reading, there are very limited available site locations that would be appropriate for school locations. The district has utilized its existing space by building two gateway schools on the grounds of existing elementary schools. The other district schools are landlocked, so the district has had to seek other sites within the city.

B. Identify any anticipated expansion of services that may result from improvement of facilities for the proposed program, as applicable.

As previously stated, the Naval-Marine Corps Reserve Center will allow the district to expand its pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs.

C. Identify whether the need for the proposed program is a result of the requirement to meet or comply with established state standards.

The district is required by state code to offer an alternative education program.

Regarding the proposed early childhood program, state law does not mandate pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs. However, they are both evidenced-based strategies that positively affect student learning. The district's Strategic Plan identifies early childhood education as a strategy for increasing student achievement. The district is compelled to increase student achievement to meet the academic accountability requirements of the Pennsylvania Accountability System, which applies to all public schools and districts. The system is based upon the State's content and achievement standards, valid and reliable measures of academic achievement, and other key indicators of school and district performance such as attendance and graduation rates. The Pennsylvania Accountability System was instituted to meet the requirements of the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation and has the same end goal - having every child in the Commonwealth proficient or above in reading and mathematics by the year 2014. Schools and districts that do not meet the "Adequate Yearly Progress" achievement standards face consequences imposed under the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation. Therefore, although expansion of early childhood programs are not required to comply with state standards, it is incumbent upon the district to do so.

D. Include statement that applicant does not currently possess real estate suitable for the proposed program.

As stated previously in Section II. 3 (A), the district does not have real estate suitable for operating the proposed programs.

- 4. In the case of a homeless assistance program, a description of how the program will be coordinated with other homeless assistance programs in the communities in the vicinity of Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Center**

Not applicable.

- 5. A description of the time required to redevelop the property for the proposed use and to start the proposed program.**

Although the Navy-Marine Corps Reserve Center is not available until 2010, the district-operated alternative education program is currently being developed and is scheduled to operate in a leased property for 2008-09. However, this property is not owned by the school district but is being used as a temporary site.

III. BUILDINGS/ PROPERTY NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT PROGRAM

- 1. A narrative description of requested facilities, land, buildings, improvements, easements and related equipment. If only a portion of any of these assets is requested, indicate which portion. (Describe by building number and include an illustrative map).**

The district is requesting the 7.06 acres of land and the structures erected upon the land, including the administrative/office facility (one structure); maintenance production facility (four structures); utility facilities (four structures); and paved areas.

2. **Is the applicant requesting a deed transfer? Would the applicant agree to a third party owning the property and building and leasing such properties to the applicant at no cost?**

The district is requesting a deed transfer.

3. **Indicate what land use and zoning requirements or entitlements are necessary for the applicant to implement its Proposed Program in and around the buildings and property requested.**

The property will require re-zoning for school use.

4. **Indicate whether existing buildings will be used and describe any new construction or rehabilitation that is anticipated on the requested property necessary for program implementation.**

Based upon a thorough structural assessment, the district will augment the existing buildings through renovation and, if necessary, new construction to meet the meet the programmatic needs.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The applicant must demonstrate a record of performance and experience with similar programs, viability, and financial and administrative solvency and stability based on the following:

1. **A general description of past performance and experience operating similar programs to those proposed.**

The Reading School District has been operating as a school district since the late 1800's. The district has established and operated alternative education programs in the past. And, of course, it currently operates early childhood programs.

The district has received recognition from Dr. Gerald L. Zahorchak, Secretary of Education for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In a letter dated October 10, 2007, Dr. Zahorchak congratulates the district for its efforts in moving students towards the goal of proficiency. He states, "In almost every school, grades 4-8 in reading and mathematics, the students at the below basic and basic levels made more than one year's worth of growth for a year's worth of schooling." He also indicates that the gains for these cohorts of students are significantly above the growth standard, as defined by the Pennsylvania Value-Added Assessment System.

2. A list of all projects/properties owned or managed (as applicable to the request) by the applicant.

The Reading School District currently owns and operates 14 elementary schools (Pre-K-5), one early childhood cottage (K); four middle schools (grades 6-8); two sixth grade gateway schools; one high school (grades 9-12), one Admin. building, and one facilities supply building. The district is currently re-constructing its Millmont Elementary School to house an elementary school (Pre-K -5) and a third sixth grade gateway school. On the site of the former St. Joseph Hospital, the district is currently constructing a junior high school for grades 9-10 to alleviate overcrowding at Reading High School (grades 9-12).

See information in following chart:

Reading SD Building Information

Building	Year Built	Last Renovation	Student Capacity	Student Enrollment
Northeast Middle School	1922	1987	1,000	1,050
Millmont Elem. (being re-built) & GS for Agriculture, Science & Ecology	1923 2008	In progress	375 375	New schools In progress
Riverside Elementary	1924	2001	1,000	914
Southern Middle School	1924	1995	1,000	757
Glenside Elementary	1926	1989	525	387
Reading High School	1926	1989	3,375	4,174
Tyson Schoener Elementary	1928	2003	875	635
Southwest Middle School	1929	1986	1,000	707
13th and Union Elementary	1929	2001	875	975
Amanda E. Stout Elementary	1935	None	750	743
Northwest Middle School	1935	1986	1,000	933
Thomas Ford Elementary	1955	1960	750	525
Lauer's Park Elementary	1960	2002	850	785
13th and Green Elementary	1967	None	600	704
10th and Green Elementary	1967	None	550	666
12th and Marion Elementary	1967	2003	450	556
16th and Haak Elementary	1968	2001	600	643
Northwest Area Elementary	1969	2001	825	789
10th and Penn Elementary	1995	None	575	577
GS for Performing Arts at Glenside	2006	New	375	305
GS for Comm. & Tech. at Thomas Ford	2006	New	375	304
The Citadel (being built)	2009	NA	3,057	---

The Reading School District also owns an Administration Building and a maintenance & supply facility.

3. **Plans for the expansion of the organization to meet an increased demand for services from the proposed programs. Identify any organizational adjustments needed for proposed programs including number of employees needed and job descriptions.**

See Section II #1 for list of alternative education personnel being hired. The district would also hire any additional pre-kindergarten and kindergarten teachers needed for the early childhood center.

4. **Provide a list of management functions that will be staffed at the property or in buildings requested and whether those management functions will be provided by the applicant or contracted out to a third party. If contracted out, please provide information regarding the selection process for those management services and how often a site manager will visit the property.**

Administrative support for the alternative education program will be provided by three onsite administrators: principals, vice principal and instructional supervisor. The Director of Alternative Education and the Director Student Services, both central office administrators, will provide additional administrative oversight of the alternative education program. A custodian and security guard will be on site for facility management. The district's facility foremen and Security Chief will directly supervise them.

5. Private agency information

Not applicable.

